

other rare childhood disorders. The urgency grows everyday when mothers and fathers watch their children's health rapidly deteriorate.

Jasper Duinstras friends and family have formed a nonprofit organization called Jasper Against Batten, and children from 20 elementary schools have mobilized one of the largest kids helping kids initiatives on behalf of this group. The money these students are raising will go toward research for a treatment and maybe one day, a cure.

Jasper Duinstra is just one of the thousands of children who need our support in the fight against Batten disease and other fatal orphan diseases. In addition to private efforts to raise money through groups like Jasper Against Batten, the National Institutes of Health is funding research in Batten disease and other rare diseases.

While the number of Americans affected by any particular rare disease may be very small, over 6,000 rare diseases have been identified. Taken together, these diseases affect about 25 million Americans. The burden of these diseases is great, not only because of the number of people affected but because too often there are few or no treatments available for people suffering from them.

The Orphan Drug Act provides some incentives for drug companies to develop drugs for rare diseases. This has been a successful effort, and more than 200 drugs and biological products for rare diseases have been brought to the U.S. market. However, despite the success in finding treatments for some rare diseases, others such as Batten disease have seen relatively little progress over the last several decades. Today, there are promising experimental treatments, but they need to find their way more quickly to these children who are rapidly deteriorating.

In addition to searching for new and more readily available treatments, some scientists are also searching for ways to use existing drugs to treat rare diseases that have few options for treatment. A Chicago-based research foundation called Partnership for Cures has teamed with Jasper Against Batten and is now doing just that. In partnership with the National Institutes of Health, they are currently screening thousands of drugs that have already been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to see whether there are beneficial side effects that could slow down the progression of rare orphan diseases, starting with Batten.

I know Jasper's family is heartbroken, and I commend his family, friends, and the Chicago community for responding to tragedy with action. With biomedical researchers, clinicians, and community partners, Jasper's family is leading the fight to find a cure for Batten disease and for quicker access to treatments for children with many fatal orphan diseases.

INSIDE THE GUN SHOW

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California, Davis, released an important report earlier this month detailing many of the potential dangers at gun shows. The report, "Inside Gun Shows: What Goes on When Everybody Thinks Nobody's Watching," was composed from an analysis of existing research as well as direct observation and photographic evidence. During a 3-year period, data was collected from 78 gun shows in 19 States. The report provides a clear illustration of a largely unregulated gun market that is "an important source of guns used in criminal violence."

Under the Federal Brady Act, before an individual can purchase a handgun from a licensed dealer, they must pass a background check to insure they are not legally prohibited from purchasing or possessing a firearm. In 2008, 9.9 million background checks were conducted for firearm purchases, 147,000 of which were rejected. The majority of these denials were the consequence of a prior conviction or indictment. However, when an individual purchases a handgun from a private citizen, who is not a licensed gun dealer, there are no requirements to ensure that the purchaser is not in a prohibited category. Because private party transactions account for approximately 40 percent of all gun sales, current Federal background check requirements have limited affect over the overall rates of gun-related violent crime.

Based on promoter listing, the report estimates that there were nearly 2,800 gun shows in the United States during 2007. Generally open to the public, they can vary in size from fewer than 100 display tables to a few thousand. Accounting for approximately one-third of sales at these shows, unlicensed vendors often seek to exploit their unregulated status. At one show, a vender advertised with a sign that read "No background checks required; we only need to know where you live and how old you are."

The report details that while a wide range of guns can be found at most gun shows, assault weapons, particularly civilian versions AR and AK rifles, are much more prominent than one might generally see at a licensed gun store. Semiautomatic pistols that accept the same high-capacity magazines and fire the same ammunition as AR and AK rifles are also heavily present. Even .50 caliber rifles, notorious for their extraordinary destructive capabilities, are available from some private parties.

According to the report, there were more than 360,000 violent crimes involving guns, including an estimated 11,512 homicides, committed in the United States in 2007 alone. While America accounts for less than 5 percent of the world's population, we account for somewhere between 35 to 50 percent of all firearms in civilian hands. Gun shows present an ideal op-

portunity for gun traffickers to make unregulated purchases. I urge my colleagues to take up and pass sensible gun legislation that will help prevent such acts and help protect the safety of our communities.

ZIMBABWE

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I held a hearing last week of the Subcommittee on African Affairs to explore U.S. policy options toward Zimbabwe's transition. The hearing confirmed that far too little progress has been made in implementing the Global Political Agreement signed last year and that abuses continue at an alarming rate. The transition remains incomplete and far from irreversible. Yet at the same time, the hearing made clear to me the great potential that this transition holds and the great opportunity for the United States and those who care about Zimbabwe to help advance real reform and recovery. We need to seize this opportunity and look for ways that we can proactively engage and help strengthen the hands of reformers in Zimbabwe's transitional government.

Just over a year ago, Zimbabwe was in the throes of intense violence carried out by Robert Mugabe and his allies against the opposition MDC's members, supporters, and families. This was a deliberate campaign to hold on to power and subvert the will of the people expressed in the March 29 elections. Once considered a liberator of his people, Mugabe had become one of the most despotic and brutal leaders of the day. And under his watch, the Zimbabwean economy had gone from one of Africa's most prosperous to one of Africa's most desperate. By the end of last year, millions of Zimbabweans were at risk of starvation and official estimates put inflation at 231 million percent.

The situation today in Zimbabwe looks quite different, at least on the surface. Last September, with South Africa's mediation, the parties signed the Global Political Agreement and committed to form a transitional government. Then, after 5 months of delays, MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai was sworn in as Prime Minister and the MDC assumed control of several key ministries. A year before, this would have been inconceivable for most Zimbabweans. Yet, it happened and has brought forth a sense of possibility that has not been there in years. That optimism has been furthered by the success of the new Minister of Finance from MDC, Tendai Biti, in stopping the economic decline and taking initial steps to promote economic growth.

These changes are quite significant, though there is still a long way to go toward restoring the rule of law. Mugabe continues to refuse to implement important aspects of the Global Political Agreement, for example the appointment of new provincial governors and the replacement of the Reserve Bank Governor and Attorney

General. He and his allies are doing everything they can to maintain their historic patronage system and power structures. Moreover, security forces are largely still operating as instruments of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party, condoning land takeovers and harassing MDC and civil society activists. According to Human Rights Watch, the police and army continue to use brutal force to control access to the diamond fields of Marange district in eastern Zimbabwe.

Until we see an end to these abuses and real, irreversible progress on implementation of the Global Political Agreement, I see no reason for the United States to repeal sanctions. All of us at the hearing I chaired seemed to be in agreement on that. The European Union has taken the same position after a high-level delegation visited Harare last month. Together, we need to keep the spotlight and the pressure on those who are obstructing implementation of the Global Political Agreement and continuing to perpetrate abuses. And if nothing changes, we should look for ways to ramp up that pressure.

However, keeping the pressure on Mugabe and hardliners is not a sufficient strategy in and of itself to move Zimbabwe's transition forward. We also need to take steps—both symbolic and substantive—to engage with and empower reformers within the transitional government. I am glad that the United States is already providing support to the Office of the Prime Minister, and we should look at ways we can provide technical assistance to other ministries that demonstrate a commitment to reform, especially the Ministry of Finance. In addition, shifting our humanitarian assistance in Zimbabwe to lay the groundwork for social and economic recovery can help advance the political transition. We should also consider working with like-minded donors to develop a plan and dedicated resources for Zimbabwe's economic recovery that could be leveraged for genuine democratic reform.

Mr. President, the reality is that the United States is already doing and spending a lot in Zimbabwe, but we need to better target our diplomacy and our resources toward advancing this transition. Over the last few years, our diplomats have been on the frontlines of speaking out against repression and pushing for democratic change in Zimbabwe. With the formation of the transitional government, the playing field has changed. But that does not mean we should retreat to the sidelines and stop trying to proactively advance our goals. We need to keep working with all Zimbabweans who are committed to a peaceful, democratic future to push this transition forward. In the coming months, I look forward to working with the administration to do just that.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ICBM FORCE

Mr. ENZI. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the 20th Air Force as the U.S. Air Force celebrates the 50th anniversary of the first nuclear-tipped inter-continental ballistic missile on alert. I join my colleague Senator KENT CONRAD from North Dakota as co-chair of the Senate ICBM Coalition to pay special tribute to a force that succeeds daily in its mission of providing safety and security for our great Nation.

My first contact with F.E. Warren Air Force Base in Wyoming as an ICBM base was when I was in Boy Scouts. Our rocket troop visited an Atlas missile site near Cheyenne and we learned about the deterrent effect of this high technology. Even then, we knew this force was magnificent.

From the first ICBM placed on alert in 1959 at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California, our Nation's force has grown and adapted the delivery systems leading to today's force with three Missile Wings. Today's ICBM force has missile fields in Wyoming, North Dakota, Montana, Colorado, and Nebraska. The force partners with Hill Air Force Base in Utah and its command structure will soon transfer to Air Force Global Strike Command in Louisiana. We have a force whose direct domestic impact spans across seven States.

America's dispersed and alert Minuteman III ICBM force is a critical element of the nuclear triad and represents our country's most responsive, stabilizing, and cost-effective strategic force. The strategic nuclear forces that deterred Soviet aggression and kept the limited conflicts of the Cold War era from escalating continue to play a critical role in deterring aggression and dissuading new near-peer competitors.

The element that has unchanged in the last 50 years is the dedication of the men and women of the Air Force to safeguard and carry out this mission. This force of weapons and personnel has been deployed every hour of every day for the last 50 years. The hours on alert, being on patrol and maintaining and upgrading the missile systems are abundant.

The 20th Air Force is home to the most powerful force in our entire military. The mission of safeguarding the Nation's ICBM force has been entrusted to the best military in existence. The mission has been successful and will continue to be.

I know all Members of the Senate will join me in thanking the current and former members of the Air Force who have served in the missile fields over the last 50 years. I also thank my colleague, Senator CONRAD, for his work on behalf of on the coalition and recognizing this historic anniversary.

TRIBUTE TO DIANE WOLK

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, many of us have been touched by a family mem-

ber or friend who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. In fact, more than 5.3 million people in the United States are living with Alzheimer's, which translates into a new case every 70 seconds. As our Nation ages, more and more cases will develop each year and an estimated million new cases will be diagnosed annually by 2050. I am proud to be a cosponsor of S. 1492, the Alzheimer's Breakthrough Act of 2009 which helps fund Alzheimer's disease research, gives assistance to caregivers, and increases public education about prevention of Alzheimer's.

It is not just the elderly who are diagnosed with Alzheimer's. My good friend Diane Wolk of Castleton, VT, in her early fifties was diagnosed about a year and a half ago with early onset Alzheimer's. Instead of hiding her diagnosis or giving up hope, Diane now travels the State and the country sharing her experience with others. Through promoting education and early intervention, Diane helps patients and their family members recognize their symptoms and seek diagnosis and treatment. I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a story from the Burlington Free Press about Diane's courage and perseverance in the face of an overwhelming diagnosis.

Marcelle and I are so proud of her, and of the inspiration she gives to Alzheimer's patients in Vermont and nationwide. She is a true hero.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington FreePress.com]

LESSONS FROM ALZHEIMER'S

(By Sally Pollak)

Diane Wolk spent her adult life as an educator, a teacher or principal in Vermont public schools. One day this summer, Wolk said she had another lesson she'd like to share with people—perhaps her most important.

Wolk's teaching moment came in a lounge at Fletcher Allen Health Care. She was in Burlington with her husband, Dave Wolk, to undergo an experimental treatment for Alzheimer's disease, a degenerative brain disorder Wolk was diagnosed with two years ago.

Diane Wolk wanted to tell people that in the face of confusing symptoms and diagnosis with a "scary" illness, it is both possible and important to approach the situation in an honest, upbeat and life-affirming way.

"You have to take the fear out of the diagnosis," Wolk, 58, said. "It's not a death sentence. You can curl up and die or you can do something. I'm always the teacher, and if I can help someone else, I will."

Wolk is hopeful that talking about her experience with Alzheimer's, which she developed at an unusually early age, might help others recognize symptoms, seek medical care, find courage and summon an upbeat attitude.

"I have a very easy life," she said in the hospital. "I have a wonderful husband. This is a little setback, but things are good. Very few people get out of this life unscathed. I try to stay active and upbeat. People deal with all kinds of difficult situations, and this one—it's really just bad luck."

Wolk is married to Dave Wolk, 56, the president of Castleton State College and